



# Military Learning for Credit Act

Senators Chris Coons and Joni Ernst

Academic credits play a key role for every college student whose goal is to earn a degree. They help measure students' progress toward graduation and, along with grade point averages, their academic success. Many colleges and universities award academic credit for learning that has been acquired outside of a traditional classroom setting, such as the learning that occurs through employment or military training. Prior learning assessments are one way institutions can evaluate the learning that has been acquired through these experiences, and then, to award credit as appropriate.

Each year, veterans receive nearly \$10 billion in GI bill benefits to use at the college or university of their choice. Under current law, veterans receiving benefits under the Post 9/11 GI bill are permitted to use a portion of their benefits to cover the costs associated with prior learning assessments. However, for veterans receiving benefits under other programs, such as the Montgomery GI bill, the cost of prior learning assessments is not covered by their benefits.

The Military Learning for Credit Act will correct this inequity to ensure that all veterans, regardless of the program under which they receive their benefits, will be able to designate a small portion of their benefits to cover the costs associated with prior learning assessments. Helping veterans obtain college credit for prior military learning and training can be an important lever for increasing veterans' degree attainment. The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) has found that a student who receives credit for prior learning is **two and a half times** more likely to graduate than a student who does not.

The Military Learning for Credit Act gives more veterans an opportunity to translate the expertise they developed during their training into college credit. Specifically, the Military Learning for Credit Act:

- Expands to all veterans eligibility to use veterans' educational assistance funds to cover up to \$500 of the fees required to take the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) and the Dantes Subject Standardized Test Program (DSST) credit exams, which are a group of standardized tests that assess college-level knowledge in 38 subject areas. These tests are accepted by thousands of institutions of higher education and provide a mechanism for earning college credits without taking college courses.
- Expands to all veterans the eligibility to use veterans educational assistance funds to cover up to \$500 of the fees required to take the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) Examination, which measures and certifies the essential work skills needed for success in jobs across industries and occupations. Thousands of private and public employers now ask for or require NCRC scores as part of their application process.
- Allows all student veterans to use veterans educational assistance funds toward portfolio assessments. At some institutions, students have the option to develop portfolios to document their prior learning. Portfolios generally include a written narrative and supporting documentation that explain the student's learning and its alignment with college-level content. This bill helps defray the costs of this process.
- Is structured to charge a veteran's educational assistance monthly entitlement on a pro-rated basis, meaning the veteran's monthly GI benefit will only be charged for the actual cost of the examination.
- By shortening the time to degree for student veterans who are able to take and pass these exams and earn credits, has the potential to increase veteran degree-completion rates and to save the federal government money.

The legislation does not authorize any new funding, but provides another use for existing veteran educational assistance entitlements.

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